

BOOK REVIEW:
THE FLORA OF ESSEX COUNTY,
MASSACHUSETTS¹

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In 1880 a *Flora of Essex County, Massachusetts* was published by John Robinson who had been in charge of the herbarium of the Peabody Museum in Salem, Massachusetts for a number of years, eventually becoming Director of the Museum. His flora consisted of a list of the species then growing or reported to be growing in the County, often with the names of the collectors but with only scant information concerning the habit or habitat or the localities where the species were found. The genera were listed under families that were referred to as "orders" in the summary, following the fifth edition of *Gray's Manual of Botany*. That publication, in turn, followed DeCandolle as modified by Bentham and Hooker's *Genera Plantarum*. In addition to the vascular plants, listed as Exogens, the flora also included mosses, liverworts, lichens, and algae; the fungi were covered by only a brief reference.

In 1951 Stuart Harris, then Professor of Biology at Boston University, acceded to a request to write a modern flora of the County for publication by the Peabody Museum. From that date on he devoted what time he could spare from his teaching duties and other varied interests to intensive study in the field and in some of the herbaria in which early collections from Essex County had been deposited. After many years he completed the Catalog of the Flora and some of the accompanying sections, but unfortunately did not live to complete a preface or write some of the introductory sections he had planned. These portions have been supplied by others. Dorothy Eastman Snyder,

¹*The Flora of Essex County, Massachusetts* by Stuart Kimball Harris. Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. 1975. vii + 269 pp. Map of the County on the inside cover. Sketch of Sweet Bay flower on title page. \$12.50

Consultant in Natural History at Peabody Museum, with Stuart Harris, authored the preface and also served as Editor. Other sections included: a Foreword by Richard Jefferson Eaton, former Curator of the herbarium of the New England Botanical Club, who also contributed a brief biographical sketch of the author; one on Geology in Relation to the Flora by Sarah Fraser Robbins, Director of Education at the Museum; another by Robert Lincoln Goodale, M.D., entitled History of Botanical Collecting, with biographical information about some of the collectors of Robinson's time and earlier; and a short section on Climate by Hurd C. Willett, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Meteorology, M.I.T. An End Map was drawn by Charles F. Allen II, Assistant at the Museum. The sections contributed by Dr. Harris included: a Catalog of Species; a Statistical Summary of genera, species, varieties, forms, and hybrids listed by families with each group of taxa designated as Native or Introduced; a list of Species Exclusae; and a list of collectors named in the Catalog with information as to the period and area of activity of each of them. A list of references is also included.

In the Catalog the arrangement of the families and the nomenclature follow *Gray's Manual*, 8th edition, 1950, with few exceptions, but the specific epithets are in lower case as recommended in the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature*, 1972. Under the genera the species are listed with both Latin and common names, with a brief statement as to habitat and frequency, followed by the names of towns or cities where collected, the names of the collectors, with collectors' numbers and date of collection when available. For the varieties, forms and hybrids, only the locality where collected, the collectors, collectors' numbers, and dates are given, except that information as to habitat and frequency is included for hybrid species. Preceding the Catalog is a list of towns and cities numbered in the order quoted in the Catalog. These numbers are spotted on the End Map.

In the text there are a few misstatements and typographic errors, and in the Catalog there are a number of errors, mostly typographic. In the list of references and also in the section listing the publications by the author there are numerous mistakes, mostly in the year or the volume number of the publication cited. In addition there are some discrepancies which should be recorded. A few of the species included in the Species Exclusae are also listed in the Catalog. It seems probable that Dr. Harris may have decided that some of the questionable species should be included in the Catalog but failed to find the time later to delete the names from the Species Exclusae. Again, if the Statistical Summary is checked against the Catalog, it will be discovered that there are instances in which the two do not agree. Any corrections in the Statistical Summary must affect the Total Summary by Minor Groups on page 23. Thus it is impossible to make any exact comparison in totals with Robinson's Flora. In Harris's Flora the figure given for the Grand Total Taxa (1767) is the same number as that given for the total species. It is evident that it fails to include the totals for varieties, forms, and hybrids.

These discrepancies and errors are difficult to explain but, knowing the competence of Stuart Harris and his scholarly standards, it seems most probable that the inconsistencies and most of the other errors would have been remedied if he could have lived to make that final check that is so essential before any manuscript goes to the printer.

Fortunately, none of these difficulties or errors are of enough significance to detract from the interest or value of this publication. The catalog of species constitutes an authoritative checklist of the flora of the County and, as emphasized in the Foreword (p. vii), Essex County is noteworthy from a phytogeographical point of view. It is an area where Canadian zone species overlap traces of a southern flora, where the northern *Habenaria blephariglottis* grows in the shelter of an indigenous colony of

Magnolia virginiana, Moosewood (*Acer pensylvanicum*) occurs rather abundantly within a few rods of the sea-cliffs at Manchester, and Hobble-bush (*Viburnum alnifolium*) not far away in the same town, both of the last two species characteristic of more northern upland woods.

Harris's list serves very effectively to up-date Robinson's Flora by adding numerous species that were either not present or had not been reported in 1880, and it gives much additional information not included by Robinson. It furnishes extensive coverage for an area that has lacked adequate treatment in a single volume for nearly a century. It also stands as a testimonial to the competence of Stuart Harris as a taxonomist, and the sections contributed by others serve as a fitting memorial to a highly respected botanist whose life was all too short.

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